

DOJ announces early success in child support absconder initiative

The Delaware Department of Justice's Family Division announced that a new targeting of child support absconders has resulted in location of individuals who collectively owe more than \$1 million in child support payments in order for them to begin paying support to their families.

Led by Deputy Attorney General Phyllis Scully, Special Investigator William McGillan, and Paralegal Tracy Cunningham, the initiative has located 20 people with outstanding warrants for failure to pay or failure to appear, with individuals owing between roughly \$10,000 and \$146,000 in unpaid child support. Absconders are targeted with outreach efforts and persuaded to voluntarily surrender and begin a process of resolving their arrears.

"Our goal is first and foremost to support families and kids who depend on child support," said Abigail Rodgers Layton, Director of the Family Division. "Child support payments can be the only thing standing between children of single parents and poverty, so when someone abandons their obligations, they are not only putting themselves at risk of arrest, they're also hurting their kids and the community. This initiative's early success in convincing absconders to get on track is making real progress for kids, keeping law enforcement safe, and ultimately helping the individual take responsibility and do the right thing."

Absconders who have legitimate basis to modify their payments—due, for example, to life-changing experiences like the loss of a job or health problems—can file with the courts to request a reassessment of their obligation.

The initiative has succeeded in the City of Wilmington and New Castle County with the assistance of Delaware State Police, New Castle County Police, and Wilmington Police, and has begun to expand into Kent County and Sussex County. Delawareans who struggle to collect child support can contact the Department of Justice at (302) 577-8400.